THE IDEAL MUSLIM WIFE

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First Published 1992
Re-Printed 2001.
Re-Printed 2007.

Published by:-
Islamic Education Trust
(Publications Division)
P.M.B. 229, Minna, Niger State.

Printed by
llmi Press, llmi Avenue, P. O. Box 2572,
Minna, Niger State

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I was invited to give a lecture to a group of students on ***"The Ideal Muslim Wife"***. I felt that the subject had already been given a lot of attention, so requested permission to present instead a paper on "*The **Ideal Muslim Husband",*** who seldom got any attention at all.

The paper was subsequently published as a booklet, and has been well-received especially by women, many of whom had little idea of the duties of Muslim husbands towards their wives or of the numerous verses of the Qur'an and Hadith (Sayings and Practices of the Prophet Muhammad) restraining men from abusing women's rights.

The booklet is now popular as a wedding gift for bridegrooms, and I have received a number of requests to write its companion volume ***"The Ideal Muslim wife",*** as a gift for a bride.

I must confess that this volume has been more difficult to write, for several reasons. The first is the problem of conscience. In describing the ideal wife one becomes very aware of one's own shortcomings and feels embarrassed to offer advice, which one has sometimes failed to follow.

The second reason why this volume has been more difficult than the first is that, while many of the Muslim husbands' duties have been defined in the Qur'an in clear legal terms, the wife's duties are much less specific and are seldom in the form of legal restraints or duties. They consist more of moral exhortations and descriptions of the qualities of good women and warning against some of the attitudes and behaviour of the pagan women of the Jahiliyyah (the time of Ignorance of the Arabs before Islam).

My approach to this subject has been therefore to read or re-read the various references in the Qur'an and Hadith with regard to the behaviour of a wife and to consider these within the context of the Islamic view of marriage and the family.

It should not be overlooked that the basic moral teachings of Islam are addressed to both men and women. Because this booklet is focussing on the wife, it does not mean that such teachings are for women only. For example, where the Qur'an enjoins modesty on women it is coupled with another verse enjoining modesty on men (Qur'an 24:30-31). Another verse commends the virtues of humility and chastity in both men and women (Qur'an 33:35). Husband and wife are therefore expected to show mutual consideration for each other's needs and feelings.

However, the roles of men and women in life and within the family structure are not identical just as the male and female are not biologically or psychologically identical. Therefore there are some areas where the behaviour expected of each is different. In ***"The Ideal Muslim Husband"*** I focused on the duties of the husband and in this book I focus on those of the wife. To get the total picture of their mutual duties the books should be read together.

Lastly in this context, it must be pointed out that the *"Ideal"* Muslim wife does not imply a stereotype', Every human being is different and therefore every pair of human beings who form a marriage must be different in the precise way they relate to each other. What pleases one man in a wife may be irritating to another (and vice versa). There are always aspects of the personality which are unique and help to give life its variety and freshness The Prophet's wives reflected such differences in character. Their individuality was not submerged by being good wives and "mothers of the believers".

Nevertheless, there are certain basic attitudes and actions that may be regarded as good for any marriage and others that are harmful to it.

I hope that what follows will be a faithful reflection of Islamic teachings and a useful guide to any wife.

Chapter]

WHAT IS MARRIAGE FOR?

"When a servant (of Allah) marries, he perfects half his religion; and let him fear Allah with regard to the remaining half."

(Hadith from Baihaqi)

Marriage in Islam is encouraged for those who have reached the age of physical and psycho logical maturity. It should not be unnecessarily delayed if there is a suitable partner available and the means to establish a family. Divorced people, widows and widowers are also encouraged to re-marry. Religious celibacy is strongly discouraged. Therefore although marriage is not a compulsory duty for all people under all circumstances and due allowance is made for those who do not have the capacity for marriage for one reason or other, the emphasis is nevertheless strongly in favour of marriage as the normal adult status.

What are the benefits of this positive attitude to marriage?

1, Marriage is a permanent relationship between a man and a woman, which provides for their mutual care, and for the lawful development and expression of love between them. It links physical love with personal care and responsibility towards the partner and towards any children that may be born of the union.

'" It is only in the context of marriage that a woman is protected for her vital role as the mother of the next

generation. Modern experiments with free love, unmarried motherhood and single parent families have only confirmed their disruptive social and economic effects, particularly on women and their disastrous consequences for the next generation. Children need both parents for a secure and well adjusted childhood.

3. The benefit of marriage is not only to the wife and children and to the society at large, but also to the husband. Recent studies in the United Kingdom have revealed that while divorce causes suffering to both partners it appeared to cause even more depression among husbands than wives. The value of a wife in providing psychological comfort as well as physical love should not be under-estimated. The man without the responsibilities and comforts of a wife and family is more exposed to temptations of unlawful sexual relations and deviant behaviour. It cannot be a mere coincidence that the decline of marriage in the western world today has been accompanied by a rise in aggressive homosexuality, pornography, child sexual abuse and the danger of rape - even of small girls and old women.

The Qur'an has referred to the marriage relationship as one of Allah's wonders that enshrines the greatest and most transforming of all human emotions - love:

> *·'And among His wonders is this: He creates for you mates out of your own nature so that you may incline towards them, and He engenders love and tenderness between you. In this, behold, there are signs indeed for people who think."* (Qur'an 30:21)

In another verse of the Qur'an Allah says:

> *"They (wives) are your garments and you are their garments."* (Qur'an 2:187)

Comfort, protection and intimacy are all comprised in these descriptions of the marriage relationship as it is intended to be. The Prophet (peace be upon him) commented: *"You have seen nothing like marriage for increasing the love of two people."* (Hadith from Ibn Majah.)

Marriage is not intended to be a prison but a base, a safe haven, a source of contentment, tranquility, consolation and spiritual strength through shared commitment and experience. If it is turned into an arena for strife, discontent, abuse, or oppression it is failing to fulfill its proper function.

Therefore every effort should be made to ensure that there is compatibility between a man and woman before they are betrothed and every precaution should be taken to avoid the souring of a marriage once it is established. What follows is based on the guidance of the Qur'an and Sunnah to help a wife on how to keep her marriage a happy one that conforms to the descriptions of marriage in the Qur'an.

Chapter 2

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PARTNER

Marriages can go wrong from Day one if the couple are not basically compatible. Prevention in this respect is better than cure. It is very important to try to ensure that one is looking for the right qualities in a marriage partner. The Prophet said that "*A woman may be married for four reasons - her wealth, her rank, her beauty and her religious character. Therefore choose the one with the religious character and prosper."* (Hadith from Bukhari and Muslim.)

The same applies in the choice of a husband by a woman. It is unwise for a woman to accept a man's proposal because he is handsome, rich or of high social status if he is lacking in good religious character. The first three are no guarantee of happiness. But a man of genuinely religious character is likely to observe the Islamic requirement of kindness to his wife, and to abide by Allah's laws with regard to his behaviour towards her. His consciousness of Allah acts as a restraint on selfishness. Whattever his weakness, at least he does not deliberately do wrong.

A girl or woman should pray regularly for a good husband. She should also find out as much as possible about the character and religious practice of any suitor, and her relatives should help her to get objective information. The Prophet (peace be upon him) also advised that a couple thinking of marriage should be given the chance to meet (in the presence of a relative) in order to ascertain at least basic compatibility. (See

several Hadith from Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi. Nasai, Ibn Majah.)

The choice of the right partner is very important for both the man and woman. In view of the degree of love and respect a wife should give to her husband, it is advisable that she should marry someone who is really worth that love and respect.

Chapter3

SINCERITY AND TRUST

The Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

> *"Religion is sincerity."* Someone asked: *"Sincerity to whom?"* He replied: *"To Allah and His Book and His Messenger and the leaders of the Muslims and to the generality of them."* (Hadith from Muslim)

Sincerity is therefore closely identified with true religious belief. Sincerity towards her husband is an essential requirement for a wife. It underlines all her duties and manifests itself in many ways.

Firstly it implies having her husband's interests at heart and wanting only good for him.

Secondly it implies truthfulness so that her husband learns to trust her in word and deed. She would never tell him a lie even in a small matter because it will sow in him the seed of doubt about her trustworthiness in greater matters. Once trust has been shaken it is hard to rebuild it.

If a wife tells a lie to her husband to cover up something else she did, she only compounds her offence. She should in all circumstances repent sincerely to Allah and seek His forgiveness. She should then tell her husband the truth and seek his forgiveness unless the original offence is a matter that would put him into mental torment or destroy the marriage. In this case it

may be more considerate towards him that she should repent to God silently within her own conscience a amend her behaviour in future".

The Prophet (peace be upon him) directed people to forgive those who ask for forgiveness. The wife who sincerely repents, tells the truth and seeks forgiveness may be able to re-establish trust, but the shameless liar leaves her husband in a state of constant doubt, and unworthy of trust.

A good wife should therefore ensure by her behaviour that she establishes a high degree of trust her sincerity of word and deed, so that her husband confidence in her is strong enough to withstand any false rumour or slander. She should not throwaway that basic trust for any temporary expediency.

Another aspect of sincerity on the part of a wife is in supporting him in doing what is right and avoiding wrong doing. Allah says:

> *"And the believers, both men and women, are protecting friends of one another: they (all) enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and are constant in prayer, and render the zakah, and pay*

□ This view on the permissibility of silence is based on analogy with a Hadith which allows for the use of a "white lie" someone who tries to reconcile two people who have become estranged:

> "He is not a liar who reconciles two people, and speak good, and adds good from himself." (Hadith from Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi.)

heed unto Allah and His Messenger. It is they upon whom Allah will bestow His grace: truly, Allah is Almighty, Wise." (Qur'an 9:71)

The wife should herself be obedient and faithful to Allah and use her influence to help the whole family to live a righteous life. There should be mutual counselling within the family.

Long after the death of the Prophet's first wife, Khadijah, he used to praise her for her loyalty, good counsel and moral support throughout their married life.

Just as a good wife should be trustworthy, so she should trust her husband (unless she has clear first hand evidence that he is not to be trusted). She should avoid suspicion and spying on him or snooping among his possessions. The Qur'anic warning about these sins (Qur'an 49: 12) is addressed in general to all believers, men and women. They are particularly damaging within the close marriage relationship. If a husband senses that his wife is spying on him he loses the sense of freedom and security in his own home and may start to lock up his personal effects, thereby increasing the wife's suspicions. According to a Hadith the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that reading someone else's correspondence without permission is a sin. Some wives actually drive their husbands away from home by their snooping and spying, and. it is distressing for children to realise that the parents whom they trust do not trust each other.

Having laid emphasis on the basic need sincerity, trustworthiness and trust, we shall move on to consider some other qualities in a wife that I mentioned in the Qur'an and the Hadith.

Chapter 4

UNDERSTANDING YOUR HUSBAND

Whether or not a couple think they know about each other before marriage, it is after marriage that they become fully aware of each other's character, habits, moods, likes and dislikes. There is a period of adjustment after marriage. If all goes well, the idealistic, romantic and sometimes intoxicating love of the pre-marriage or honeymoon period then develops into another dimension - a more mature kind of love based on true knowledge and understanding of each other provided the partners do not behave in such a way as to kill love altogether.

To develop this permanent and lasting kind of love in marriage, a wife needs to study her husband so as to know how to please him. In addition to knowing his personal likes and dislikes she should be able to sense his moods and respond to them and to anticipate his needs - to know when he wants to talk and when he wants silence. It is this responsiveness based on sympathy and understanding, that creates lasting bonds between husband and wife.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

> *"The world is a provision, and the best provision of the world is a virtuous wife."* (Hadith from Muslim and Nasa' i.)

He is also reported to have said in elaboration:

> *"Should 1 not tell you of the best treasure of man? (It is) a virtuous woman: when he looks at her, she gladdens him; and when he tells her (anything) she is compliant; and when he is absent from her, she watches his (interest)* ." (Hadith from Abu Dawud.)

In other words she has learned to respond to his needs and to please him even by her looks not just by taking care of her beauty (which may fade) but by her loving attention. When he wants her to do something or not to do it she complies with good will. She attends to his comfort and well being and does not hurt his feelings. He is also comforted by the knowledge that this concern for his welfare is not just a show put on in his presence. She takes care of his interests also when he is absent.

A similar Hadith from Ibn Majah adds that she guards her honour and chastity when he is away.

All these characteristics of an ideal Muslim wife reflect her consideration, good manners and moral integrity.

Another Hadith reported by Talha bin Abdullah describes the opposite behaviour and its consequences:

> *A woman who talks harshly and her husband becomes sad because of her rudeness, incurs the anger of Allah until such time that she smiles on her husband and tries to please him."*

A woman who wishes her marriage to last happily into old age should therefore learn these lessons. She should not expect love to last if she is harsh, rude and disagreeable, and does not care whether her husband is pleased or not.

Allah gives us a prayer in the Qur'an:

> *"Our Lord! Grant us wives and children who will be the joy and comfort of our eyes, and guide us to be models of righteousness."* (Qur'an 25:74)

Chapter 5

AUTHORITY, CONSULTATION And OBEDIENCE

The family is a group of people closely related by blood or marriage who usually live together. In every human group there is a leader and a hierarchy of authority so that the members act in co-operation for the common good.

The head of the family in an Islamic marriage is the husband, by virtue of his role as the maintainer of the family:

> *"Men shall take full care of women with the bounties which Allah has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with what they may spend out of their possessions. And the righteous women are the truly devout ones, who guard the intimacy which Allah has (ordained to be) guarded ... "* (Qur'an 4:34)

> *"And women have rights equal to the rights incumbent on them according to what is equitable; and men have a degree above them."* (Qur'an 2:228)

This "degree" of difference in legal rights in marriage and divorce is a reflection of the husband's leadership role, and in no way implies that the woman is inferior as a moral and spiritual being. This point is stated in several Qur'anic verses and Hadith.

"And their Lord answered them: Verily I will never cause to be lost the labour of any of you. be you a male or a female - the one of you is as the other."(Qur'an 3:195) (see also Qur'an 33:35)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) is also reported to have said:

"All people are equal, as equal as the teeth of a comb. There is no claim of merit of an Arab over a non-Arab, or of a white over a black person, or of a male over a female. Only God-fearing people merit a preference with Allah." (Hadith from Ahmad ibn Hambal, alMusnad)

A wife should therefore acknowledge her husband's administrative leadership and not dispute it or set herself up as a rival in taking ultimate decisions that affect the whole family. A ship with two captains will never reach its destination.

However, leadership in Islam also has its obligations. The leader at all levels is to be motivated by love and concern for those under his care, who will naturally respond by loving their leader.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

"The best of your leaders are those whom you love and who love you, for whom you pray and who pray for you, and the worst of your leaders are those whom you hate, and

who hate you, whom you curse and who curse you. "(Hadith from Muslim)

All forms of tyranny, oppression and exploitation of the weak are condemned, and the tyrant is warned:

"Fear the prayer of the wronged, for truly there is no veil between him and Allah." (Hadith from Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, Abu Dawud,)

"The tyrant shall not enter into Paradise." (Hadith from Abu Dawud and Ahmad)

The leader is moreover obliged to consult his followers. A chapter of the Qur'an is entitled "Shura" (meaning Consultation) and it contains a description of the believers as those *"whose rule (in all matters of common concern) is consultation among themselves…"* (Qur'an 42:38)

Leadership in Islam is identified as a responsibility. It exists at various levels both in pub1ic affairs and in the family. According to a saying of the Prophet:

"Take care: each of you is a shepherd and each of you shall be asked concerning his flock. A leader is shepherd over (his) people, and he shall be asked concerning his flock; and a man is a shepherd over the people of his house, and he shall be asked concerning his flock; and a woman is a shepherd over the house of her husband and over his children, and she shall be asked concerning them; and the servant of a man is a shepherd

over the property of his master, and he shall be asked *concerning it. Take care, then, each of you is a shepherd and each of you shall be asked concerning his flock."* (Hadith from Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi.)

As can be seen from this Hadith the wife is given responsibility within the family for the smooth day-today running of the household and the upbringing of the young. We shall return to this aspect of her role in another section. Here we are concerned only with the aspect of leadership and authority in the home.

This brings us to the use of the words "ordering" and "obeying" which are used in translating some Qur'anic verses or Hadith about husband/wife relationship, for example "when he orders her, she obeys". The Arabic word "amr" used in the original text certainly has the general meaning of "to order" or "to ordain". However, in the context of family life it obviously does not have the same connotation as it would have in, for example, the army! The family is not a military unit, and for a husband to give out orders to his wife like a sergent-major on the parade would be most out of place, and indeed probably counter-productive. The relationship of husband and wife is quite different. They are not described as matter and servant in the Qur'an but as "garments to each other" -loving, sympathetic and protective. The records of the Prophet's relationship with his wives is an example of this .

A study of the word "Amr" in the Qur'an* reveals that it has a wide range of meanings, including "commanding" "biding" "instructing" and ""urging". For example in Surah 2:168-9, Allah says:

"O mankind! Partake of what is lawful and good on earth, and follow not Shaitan's footsteps: for verily he is your open foe, and he gives you 'AMR' only to do evil, and to commit deeds of abomination, and to attribute to Allah something of which you have no knowledge. "

How does Shaitan give "AMR" to people to do evil? Not by issuing commands but by urging and by persuading or by "whispering into the hearts of mankind". (Qur'an 114:5). Moreover, Allah says to Shaitan that he has no power over His creatures unless they choose to follow him (Qur'an 15:42) and Shaitan admits this (Qur'an 14:22) and Shaitan admits this (Qur'an 14:22). It is therefore clear that AMR does mean "to command" or "to order" in all contexts.

The word certainly requires interpretation and translation according to its context. In the context of married life it may be understood to mean the husband exercising his authority as a leader in accordance with Islamic principles. Making his wife understand what he wants to be done in a way that will enlist her cooperation and compliance. Anyone with an understanding of family relations will realise that this

• See The Word Constellation *"Amr'* in the Qur'an., by Saki" Kocabas (1be Islamic Philosophical! Society) published 1987, 295 Gurney Close, Barking, Essex, England.

method is much more effective than throwing out orders in an arbitrary or inconsiderate manner.

When asked to do something in this way, a wife may offer advice if she has another view or suggestion, but if the husband is not persuaded, she should accept his authority and comply - unless what he wants is contrary to the teachings of Islam, in which case she has a higher obligation of obedience to Allah, since according to a popular saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

"No obedience is due to a created being which is in disobedience to the Creator."

One of the reasons for frequent breakdown of marriage in the modern west is the women's liberation notion that the family can have two absolutely equal leaders - the husband and the wife. If in the ensuing battle of wills, neither is ready to give way, the result is likely to be separation or divorce, which may have negative effects on the partners, their children and ultimately on the society at large.

Basically women (even strong-willed ones) still feel that it is natural for a husband to lead, provided he does so in the manner mentioned above, with wisdom. It is one of the comforts of marriage for a woman that she does not have to take sole responsibility for all major decisions in the family.

Allah has created men and women as complementary to one another in co-operation and not in competition.

Chapter6

THE HOME

The Home can be a heaven or hell, depending on what the couple makes of it. As the custodian of the day to day organization of the home, the wife sets the atmosphere and tone of the household.

She is expected to be orderly, active and cheerful. While a Muslim wife is not legally required by Islamic law to cook and clean, she is the home manager and therefore responsible for ensuring that these essential jobs are done. If the husband can afford a servant or two he is expected to provide them to relieve the wife of heavy labour. Nowadays labour-saving devices are also available to ease the housework. If the husband cannot afford a servant or the wife is anyway accustomed to housework she is expected to contribute her own labour as a form of Sadaqah (charity) for which she will receive Allah's reward.

The supervision of the household is very important for the happiness and welfare of all who live in it. Anyone who has stayed in a badly-supervised hotel knows the frustrations of delays in meals, poorly-cooked food, broken-down and dirty facilities and, underlying it, the feeling that the Management does not care whether the guests are comfortable or not. It is the same in the home.

The wife who wants to keep the family together should ensure that the home is a pleasant place to be in - physically and psychologically. Good colour schemes.

well-chosen furnishings, and a clean and comfortable environment all contribute to a pleasant home.

The wise wife also knows the value of the personal touch around the house. Even if she has an outside job or has servants, the wife's own cooking, and her own sense of making the house pleasant have a strong influence on family love and cohesion. The English proverb *"The way to a man's heart is through his stomach"* is as valid today as it ever was. Preparing and serving food has a special blessing and importance in Islam whether as hospitality to guests or as charity to the needy, or as a way of pleasing the family. Even if a wife is too busy to cook on a daily basis, whatever food she prepares with her own hands to please her family will earn her their special appreciation and love.

The supervision of the household is not the only duty of the wife. She is also responsible for the care and early education of the children if she is blessed with them.

The importance of breast-feeding should be emphasised, both for its physical benefits to the child and for establishment of a close bond between mother and baby. Modern studies of the effects of breast-milk have revealed its role in protecting young children from disease, and there is also growing evidence of its link with intellectual development. The Qur'an recommends a long period of breast-feeding which maximise the benefit to the child. (Qur'an 46:15).

The mother's way of relating to the child is of lasting significance, since the effects of the training and

impressions of early childhood remain throughout adult life. It has been described as like "writing on stone"; its effects last forever. A wise mother can use this powerful influence to nurture a family that grows up to be loving, kind, co-operative, considerate, confident, disciplined, spiritually and intellectually awake and conscious of Allah in whatever they do.

An Arab proverb says *"The mother is a school"*. This is not just an empty compliment but an important observation which has implications for the seriousness of the mother's task. The psychologist Adler* confirms this observation from his studies of human development:

> *"From the moment of birth a baby seeks to connect himself with his mother. This is the purpose of his movements. For many months his mother plays overwhelmingly the most important role in his life he is almost completely dependent upon her. It is in this situation that the ability to co-operate first develops. The mother gives her baby the first contact with another human being, the first interest in some one other than himself. She is his first bridge to social life; and a baby who could make no connection at all with his mother, or with some other human being who took her place, would inevitably perish. ..*
> *... her skill, or lack of skill, has influenced all the child's potentialities. We mean nothing else by a mother's skill than her ability to co-*

• A. Adler: What Life should Mean to You (George AlIen & Iluwm Chapter 6: Family Influence.

operate with her child and to win the child to co-operate with herself. This ability is not to be taught by rules. New situations arise every day. There are thousands of points in which she must apply her insight and understanding to the child's needs. She can be skillful only if she is interested in her child and occupied in "winning his affection and securing his welfare ...

... the whole of human society is bound up with the attitude of women to motherhood. Almost everywhere the woman's part in life is undervalued and treated as secondary...

... house-keeping and home-making are too often regarded, not as contributions open to women, but as drudgery relegated to them. If a woman can really see house-keeping as an art in which she can be interested and through which she can lighten and enrich the lives of her fellows, she can make it a task equal to any other in the world. If, on the other hand, it is thought of as work too mean for a man, need we wonder when women resist their tasks, revolt against them, and set out to prove what should be obvious from the first- that women are the equals of men and no less entitled to consideration and to the opportunity to develop their capacities?

... where the woman's part is undervalued, the whole harmony of married life is destroyed. No woman who considers that to be interested in children is an inferior task can train herself

for the skill, care, understanding and sympathy that are so necessary if children are to be given a favourable position in the beginning of their lives ...

... if we trace back the cases of failure in life, we almost always discover that the mother did not fulfil her functions properly: she did not give the child a favourable start. If the mothers fail, if they are dissatisfied with their tasks and lack interest in them, the whole of mankind is endangered ..."

Islam has recognized the importance of this role of mother. She is given full appreciation for her efforts and for the troubles she endures and the sacrifices she makes for the sake of her children.

The prophet is reported to have said:
"Paradise lies at the feet of mothers"
(Hadith from Nasai and Ibn Majah).

He is also reported to have said:

"I and the woman whose cheeks have grown dark (on account of the cares and anxieties of her children) shall be like this on the Day of Resurrection here the Prophet placed together his middle and forefingers (meaning, she would be close to him). (Hadith from Abu Dawud)

On another occasion someone asked the Prophet *Messenger of God, who is most deserving of good care from me?* The Prophet replied: *"Your mother"*. The man asked: *"And who after that?"* He repeated: *"Your mother*". The man asked *"And who after that?"* The Prophet repeated

Your mother, then your father, then your nearest relatives in order of closeness." (Hadith from Bukhari and Muslim)

The role of the father is also important in child upbringing, but that of the mother is seen to entail even greater commitment. It is therefore quite wrong to devalue the role of woman as mother and homemaker. Western society in the twentieth century has become so obsessed with economic activity, paid employment and material gain for both men and women that the role of the homemaker and mother of young children has come to be regarded as nothing - an unfortunate interruption of her glorious career in the office or factory. If a housewife is asked what she does (meaning her occupation) she is likely to reply "Oh, nothing at the moment. I stay at home because of the baby." She has been brainwashed into thinking that this activity has no special value, demands no special skill, and is rated as zero in terms of occupational status and reward. She can hardly wait to "get back to work".

For a Muslim woman the home is the centre of her attention and her husband and children's welfare her first priority after her obligation to Allah.

This does not rule out her taking on a job outside the home, or continuing with her education, or giving voluntary service to the community. It is merely a matter of ensuring that her primary responsibilities of managing the home and children are taken care of, lest the family itself - the basic unit of society - should fall apart and fail to provide the security and example required for the rearing of the next generation.

The Hadith contain words of consolation mothers for all their sufferings in pregnancy, childbirth and child care,

> *"Sallamah, the nurse of his son Ibrahim, said to the Prophet (Pbuh): O Messenger of Allah, you brought tidings of all the good things to men but not to women. He said: Did your women friends put you up to asking me this question? She said: Yes, they did. He said:*
>
> *Does it not please anyone of you that if she is pregnant by her husband and he is satisfied with her that she receives the reward of one who fast and prays for the sake of Allah? And when the labour pains come no one in Heaven or earth knows what is concealed in her womb to soothe her (to cool her eyes). And when she delivers, not a mouthful of milk flows from her and not an instance of the child's suck, but she receives, for every mouthful and every suck, the reward of one good deed. And if she is kept awake by her child at night, she receives the reward of one who frees seventy slaves for the sake of Allah."* Narrated by Anas, al-Tabarani.

Chapter 7

GOOD COUNSEL AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

We have mentioned that the Islamic concept of leadership includes consultation and acceptance of good advice.

In a successful marriage there should therefore be ready communication between husband and wife. Matters such as the children's upbringing, education and eventual marriage, other family affairs, and management of money should be discussed for mutual agreement and understanding.

The wife should also take an intelligent interest in her husband's work and other activities, and keep up-to-date with current affairs and general knowledge. For this it helps if there is a reasonable degree of educational quality between husband and wife.

If the educational gap is very wide, the husband and wife may be unable to communicate because her level of understanding may be too low for her to share his interests and concerns. They may drift apart because they have nothing of mutual interest to talk about. In such cases the husband tends to spend most of his leisure hours outside the home with his friends and comes home only to eat and sleep.

If the wife is unlucky enough to have a low educational level, she should try to remedy the situation whatever her age, since the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught that *"the search for knowledge is a duty for every*

Muslim, male and female", and that it should be pursued *"from the cradle to the grave".* In this case the husband should support and encourage her in every possible manner.

Women who have completed secondary level can continue with higher education as full time or part-time students or by correspondence courses. If a woman cannot pursue formal education to a higher level she can register for adult education classes, and if she is literate she can increase her knowledge by reading as widely as possible. Radio and television also offer some educational programmes.

By broadening her general knowledge or pursuing an interesting field of study a wife becomes a more interesting companion, and will be in a better position to understand and advice her husband.

Likewise if her Islamic education was neglected at an earlier stage of her life, she can join Islamiyyah classes for women, or Islamic study groups. This can help her to apply Islamic standards to her own family life and teach her own children in turn.

Our role model for an intellectual active woman is the Prophet's wife Aisha who learned Islam attentively, and engaged the Prophet (peace be upon him) in deep questioning about it until she was satisfied. As a result he advised people that they could learn half their religion from her. She subsequently, when a widow became a noted authority on Hadith whose opinion was sought by the leadership on political, legal and social issues.

This is revealing of the importance of intelligent understanding among the qualities in a wife that contribute to a successful marriage.

The husband and wife, at the time of marriage, may come from different backgrounds - different ethnic groups, different socio-economic groups, or simply a different family way of life. They should not react with horror to such natural differences but exercise tolerance and sometimes humour in the process of adjustment. In this way they gradually come to a common understanding and develop their own family standards and sense of priorities. They begin to think of themselves as "we" instead of as two independent individuals.

Chapter 8

MONEY

An important area that needs mutual understanding is money. A husband is required to support his family according to his means. The wife should learn to live within those means and show appreciation. She should avoid the two extremes of meanness and extravagance in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an (25:67).

She should avoid all wastefulness, which the Qur'an identifies as a form of ingratitude to Allah (Qur'an 17:27). She should also avoid frequent demands for luxuries. If she is a good wife the husband may take pleasure in surprising her with gifts from time to time; but to be constantly asked for money for clothes and cosmetics, or to run up huge telephone bills for chatting to friends and so on can cause even patient husbands to feel resentment. A Muslim is allowed to enjoy the good and lawful things of life, but in moderation. If he or she has surplus it is far better to give some of it away as sadaqah (charity) to others in need than to waste it on unnecessary things.

If a Muslim wife has a job or earns money from an investment or property, she has full rights over her income. However, if the husband is not well off it would be an act of charity for her to contribute something to family expenses in one way or another.

It is therefore advisable for husband and wife to discuss money matters from the start of their marriage so as to achieve mutual understanding.

In this respect they need to identify their priorities, high amongst which should be to reserve enough money for the best available broad education for their children, which the Prophet described as the best gift one could make to a child (Hadith from Tirmidhi.)

Chapter 9

FRIENDS AND SOCIAL LIFE

Before marriage a girl or woman naturally has a circle of female friends who are her closest confidants. These friendships are not dropped on marriage, but a wife should remember that her closet friend now should be her husband. It is not right for her to tell her friends all the details of her married life particularly the sexual relationship, which is entirely private. Nor should she pass on to others what her husband says in a private conversation. It is indiscreet and could do harm if his private remarks are passed on to become a source of gossip. If a wife cannot control her tongue and tells her friends whatever he says or does, she will soon find herself in trouble. If she wishes to be in her husband's confidence she must be capable of keeping confidential matters to herself.

If there is a problem between her and her husband on which she needs advice she should be cautious to task only a person of proven integrity who will give sincere counsel and will not gossip to others.

In her public appearance a wife should observe Islamic principles of dress and behave modesty. She should avoid showing off her figure, her clothes or her jewellery. She should also avoid wearing perfume in public. Her dress should cover all parts of the body except the face and hands. It should be neither tight nor transparent so as to reveal the figure. It should not make her look like a man. They style and colour do not matter as long as the dress conforms to these Islamic requirements, and is not designed to attract attention.

When she is at home or away from the sight of men who are not her close relatives, she may dress to please herself and her husband.

What is the wisdom behind the difference between a Muslim woman's public appearance and private appearance?

A woman's beauty is a part of her sexual attraction. Dress and adornment may enhance that attraction or conceal it. Islam requires a husband and wife to be faithful to one another, and prescribes deterrent legal punishment for adultery. It is a part of wisdom therefore to wear clothes that conceal sexual attraction, so as not to encourage the very thing which Islam forbids.

On the other hand Islam does not regard sexual relations between spouses as sinful in themselves. On the contrary it encourages married partners to enjoy sexual relations with each other, since this will increase satisfaction in marriage and reduce the temptation to seek satisfaction outside marriage. Therefore the Muslim wife at home is expected to take care of her appearance and wear her beautiful clothes, jewellery and perfume so as to enhance her attraction to her husband.

Many women foolishly practice the reverse they wear their most attractive clothes when they go out in order to be admired by strangers, while at home they go around in old clothes with untidy hair as if it no longer matters whether their husbands find them attractive or not.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that a woman may go out for her needs. Provided she is in hijab (modest Islamic dress) she may go out for any lawful purpose. A wife should however avoid roaming around aimlessly or mixing unnecessarily with men. She should tell her husband where she is going and have his consent. She should not put herself in a situation where she is alone with a man other than her husband or close relative (within the prohibited degrees of marriage). She should not allow into her house any man of whom her husband would not approve; nor should she visit such a person. There may also be some women of whom husband disapproves, with whom he may restrict his wife's friendship - because of her habits of spreading gossip or of interference in the family affairs, or of other harmful influence. A wife should where possible, avoid actions or situations which could give rise to gossip about her conduct, or jealousy of the husband, even if she has no bad intentions.

If the wife's public appearance and behaviour indicate that she is a faithful Muslim wife she will gain the respect of other men and avoid unwanted attention. If the husband is assured of his wife's true love and respect for him, he will be spared from jealousy and suspicion. All these principles of conduct contribute to the strength of the marriage and the success of family life.

Other aspects of Islamic family and social life which a wife should observe are respect for the husband's parents, hospitality and good neighbourly relationships, fostered by acts of kindness and care for their welfares.

Chapter 10

THE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

Marriage is much more than a sexual relationship, but the sexual relationship is very important within marriage. When things go wrong with it, there is increased inclination for either or both of the partners to look elsewhere for love and emotional or physical satisfaction.

The partners both need to be considerate and responsive to each others moods and needs. Women (and indeed, men) often fail to understand the differences between male and female sexuality and thereby offend each other. They should make clear to each other what they like or dislike. The wife should take care of her appearance and make herself attractive to her husband. The Qur'an has encouraged the expression of love in the context of a lawful and spiritual relationship (Qur'an 2:223).

If a wife is actually ill or has other good reasons for not wishing to make love, the husband is expected to show consideration but she should not make a habit of refusing. Many women under-estimate the humiliation a husband feels if he is frequently rejected or fobbed off with excuses. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

> *"When a woman who has been called to her husband's bed refuses and he spends the night angry, the angels curse her until the morning.* "(Hadith from Bukhari and Muslim)

This is tough language, and for some women it needs to be, because of the serious consequences of their constant refusal.

A husband who is regularly rejected by his wife is likely to feel offended, depressed and frustrated. This causes tension and problems within the marriage and can eventually lead to divorce. A patient man may suffer in silence, but others are driven to find unlawful satisfaction elsewhere, with a mistress or a prostitute, or legitimate satisfaction by taking another wife.

A wife should therefore, weigh up the possible consequences of her coldness and give her husband all the love he needs.

In a fairly long Hadith from Muslim, it was related that some of the Prophet's Companions observed that the rich would get more reward because of their ability to give in charity. The Prophet replied that Allah had made other things to be given in charity, listing the praising of Allah and the enjoining of good actions and the forbidding of evil actions and also sexual relations. The Companions said: *"O Messenger of Allah, when one of us fulfils his sexual desire will we have* reward *for that?"* He said: *"Do you (not) think that if a person does it unlawfully he would be sinning? Likewise, if he does it lawfully (with his wife) he will have a reward.'* (Hadith from An-Nawawi)

Therefore a wife who satisfies her husband within the lawful framework of marriage and thereby protects him (and herself) from extra marital affairs not only pleases her husband but also pleases Allah. This

right to sexual relations is of course reciprocal - the wife has the same right over her husband.

It should be mentioned here the Muslims are encouraged to have children. However Islam has not prohibited child spacing by methods that do not have harmful side effects, if it is with mutual consent of husband and wife.

Jabir (a Companion of the Prophet) said that during the period when the Qur'an was being revealed be Muslims used to practice contraception by Coitus interruptus ('azl) (Hadith from Bukhari and Muslim). Muslim added that the Prophet heard of it but did not prohibit it. Abortion however is prohibited unless the mother's life is at stake. This applies also to forms of family planning which allow conception to take place but kill the embryo or prevent it from settling in the womb. An example of the first is the "morning after" pill or injection, and an example of the second is the IVD or coil. The Pill still has some question marks because of various possible side effects and uncertainty about the safety of long term use. Barrier methods such as the condom are closest to the method mentioned in the hadith (i.e. azl). Natural methods such as monitoring body temperature in order to avoid marital relations round the time of ovulation are another possible alternative.

Muslims should always pay attention to personal cleanliness and hygiene so as not to cause offence. A Muslim wife should keep herself clean and fresh by regular bathing and the use of effective deodorants, She should also regularly remove pubic hair and use pleasant perfumes in the home.

Chapter11

A CO-WIFE

Although the majority of Muslim marriages are monogamous, Islamic law has also made provision for polygamous marriage. These are very rare in some countries but more common in others, depending on the customs of the people and their economic circumstances. Therefore, it is proper to say something here about the ideal Muslim wife in a polygamous marriage.

It should first be made dear that a woman who does not want to be a part of a polygamous household does not have to be. The marriage contract can include a clause whereby if the husband wishes to take another wife, the first wife is given the option of unopposed divorce. Likewise, since a bride's consent to marriage is required, she is not obliged to accept the proposal of a man who is already married.

However, there are circumstances where the first wife may accept the coming of a co-wife as preferable to the available alternatives, and in some cases she may actually welcome it.

Likewise a new wife may decide she would rather share the man she loves than not to marry him at all. Perhaps his first marriage is not very happy but she may not wish to be the cause of the divorce of the first wife - particularly if the latter has children, or is no longer young. There may also be cases where the first wife is an invalid due to illness or accident, or is unable to have children.

In such cases a second wife, if she sincerely cares about the welfare of the whole family, may in fact be the saviour and preserver of the first marriage.

Much depends on the attitude of the wives themselves and of course on the ability of the husband to be just and fair between his wives and their children.

The Qur'an has made it clear that the man who is not capable of doing justice should marry only one (Qur'an 4:3) and the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that a man with more than one wife who does not do justice between them will be raised on the Day of Judgement with half of his limbs hanging off.

This "justice" towards wives includes ability to maintain them and to provide for them equally not only in material terms but also to give each a fair share of his time and attention, including conjugal rights. He should also provide them with separate accommodation, as was the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Assuming that the husband is doing his best to fulfil these admittedly difficult conditions of acting justly towards his wives, how should the ideal Muslim wife behave to make a success of a polygamous marriage?

In the case of the first wife, she should regard the new wife not as a rival as a sister or a daughter (depending on the age difference). She should exercise self-control, understanding and sincerity and avoid deliberate offence. On the contrary, if she takes the initiative in trying to make the new wife comfortable it

will be a good start towards developing a relationship of kindness between wives.

The new wife for her part, should understand the likely fears of the first wife - fears of being no longer the sole queen of the household, fears of being disregarded or displaced. Such fears, and possible jealousy if the new wife is younger and more beautiful, are natural human reactions, and can only be calmed if the new wife uses her initiative to defuse them. She should behave with sincerity towards the senior wife, and act kindly to her, giving her due respect. This will help to create the sisterly or motherly relationship mentioned above.

The wives should be helpful to one another in their day-to-day lives - co-operating in the smooth running of the two households. If one is sick, the other should help her. If one travels, the other should look after her children. Exchange of gifts from time to time helps to sustain a kindly relationship.

A wife should also be kind to her co-wife's children and as far as possible to treat them like her own. She should encourage her own children to be on close terms with their half-brothers or sisters. She should avoid persuading her husband to provide for her or her children what he does not provide to the other wife or her children. Acts of injustice on his part will certainly upset the harmony of the relationship.

A wife should also avoid trying to poison her husband's mind against her co-wife, whether by telling lies against her or carrying tales. If there is friction between the two wives they should as far as possible try

to resolve the matter by mutual discussion and agreement. If they are unable to do so, then one or both may take the matter to the husband to resolve. If he wants domestic peace he must be fair, unpartial and firm if he refuses to get involved and washes his hands of responsibility for such disputes, a situation may develop where one wife continuously oppresses the other, and as the head of the family he has to stop this by admonition or by exercising necessary pressure on the oppressor until she stops. This is why a polygamous husband has to be not only firm and fair but also diplomatic and wise. If he has these necessary qualities however, a polygamous marriage can be a happy one for all those concerned, having many advantages over the alternative options of divorce or unlawful relationship outside marriage.

A wife going into a polygamous marriage should therefore see it as a test of her own sincerity, wisdom. self-discipline and patience, and try to pass the test with flying colours. If the co-wives want to compete they should compete in doing good to their husband and to each other and thereby attaining the blessings of this world and the Hereafter.

For Muslim women living in countries where Islarnic law courts do not exist there is need for caution in agreeing to become a second wife. If the law of the land does not recognize the second marriage, and the marriage subsequently runs into difficulties, the wife may find no court to uphold her Islamic rights.

Chapter 12

THE UNREASONABLE HUSBAND

Some women me unfortunate in finding that their husbands fail to practice Islamic teachings and indulge in various sins which have adverse effects on the marriage and on herself or the children.

Under these circumstances the wife should try to advise and correct him tactfully but firmly - not by nagging or starting a quarrel but in a quiet heart-to-heart talk. However if the husband's response is negative or even aggressive, the wife should seek the assistance of relatives or, if none is available, his close friends, or a respected alim (religious scholar) in persuading him to behave in a responsible manner.

If all fails she may be best advised to take this matter to a Shari' ah court'. If the husband is found to be guilty of certain types of offences or misbehaviour which violate the requirements of marriage the wife may be granted a divorce by the court. If she does not have enough legal evidence or witnesses of his misbehaviour she may decide to request for Khul' (that is, divorce by mutual agreement with the husband on the return of al or part of the wife's dowry). Allah says in the Qur'an:

• A Muslim wife living in a country where Shari'ah courts of family law do not exist may face problems over these issues. In some area; there are Councils of Islamic Scholars who meet to hear marital dispute and give rulings in accordance with the Shari'ah, but unless they have authority backing as courts they have no power to enforce attendance or compliance with their judgements. They rely on moral force and acceptance by the Muslim Community.

"If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such a settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed. And if you do good and practise self-restraint, Allah is acquainted with all you do." (Qur'an 4:128)

Divorce is disliked in Islam, and the Prophet warned against "the tasters-male and female", i.e. those who frequently marry and divorce trying one partner after another. He also said:

"Of all the things Allah has made lawful, what He most hates is divorce." (Hadith from Abu Dawud).

The Prophet (pbuh) also is reported to have said:

"If a woman asks her husband for divorce without some strong reason, the scent of paradise will be forbidden to her." (Hadith from Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah)

Nevertheless divorce is available in the final resort if a marriage is harmful to either partner or cannot give satisfaction or peace of mind to either of them.

If the wife for some reason does not wish for divorce in spite of her husband's misbehaviour, she should be careful to avoid becoming an accomplice in is evil-doing Allah says:

"O you who believe! Fulfil all obligations... and help one another in righteousness and piety, but do not help one another in sin and rancour. Mind Allah; for Allah ii strict in punishment" (Qur'an 5:1-3)

In another words a wife is responsible for her own actions and cannot push off the blame for her own sins on to her husband. If her husband is for example a drunkard she should not join in his drinking or buy or serve him with alcoholic drinks, even if he orders her to do it. This is in accordance with the Hadith that there should be no obedience to a created being in disobedience to the Creator. If the husband tries to force her to join him in wrong doing she should seek divorce., and a Shari'ah court is bound under these circumstances to order a divorce. The follows the same principles as the duty of Hijrah (Emigration) for a Muslim if he or she is prevented from practising the essentials of Islam. Those who choose to stay in a place where they or their families are likely to lose their faith and become a part of a corrupt society will be asked on the Day of Judgment why they did not migrate to a place where they would be free to practise their religion. *"Was the earth not wide enough for you to move your selves away (from evil)?"* (Qur'an 4:97)

In the same way the ideal wife who has an un-Islamic husband should:

(a) counsel him against his wrong-doing;

(b) abstain from supporting him in wrongdoing.

(The example of such a woman mentioned in the Qur'an is Asiya the wife of Pharaoh - one of the women promised Paradise while her husband as a great tyrant was destined for hell.)

(c) seek divorce if the only alternative is to be dragged into sin by the husband.

However if the wife's circumstances are such that she cannot break free of the marriage, she should take consolation from the Qur'an verse which says:

"Allah does not place on any soul a burden greater than it can bear."

In this case she should at least continue to hate the sin in accordance with another Hadith:

"If any of you sees wrongdoing he should correct it with his hand, and if that is not possible he should correct it with his tongue, and if that is not possible he should hate it in his heart - and that is the weakest of faith. " (Hadith from Muslim)

On the Day of Judgement every husband and wife will stand alone and Allah knows best what is in the heart.

Chapter 13

YOU, YOUR FAMILY AND ALLAH

Muslims should bear in mind that there are three parties to an Islamic marriage: the husband, the wife and Allah, the Lord of both, who is a witness. The Qur'an repeatedly gives a reminder that "Allah sees all that you do."

Both the husband and wife as servants of Allah should help one another to live as good Muslims, i.e. in voluntary submission to Allah, and in obedience to what He has revealed through His Prophet.

The submissiveness of the wife to the husband as mentioned earlier, is a recognition of his position as the head of the family - not in a servile relationship but with the spirit of dignified maintenance of harmony.

The husband is expected to be a responsible leader of the family, and his wife a responsible follower. If she is doing wrong he should tell her, and she should respond by trying to avoid repeating it.

According to a saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

"Paradise is the reward of a wife who pleases her husband until death." (Hadith from Ibn Majah).

Both partners should help each other to reach the Hereafter safely. A wife should avoid any behaviour that is harmful to her husband's welfare in this world or the hereafter, directly or indirectly. The Qur'an warns:

"O you who believe! Lo, among your wives and your children there are enemies for you, therefore beware of them." (Qur'an 64:14)

The wife should try to be an asset to her husband and not a liability. She should encourage him in doing good and discourage him from doing wrong.

She should not enter marriage with the intention of seeking what she can get out of it in terms of material benefits. Rather she is likely to find happiness and peace of mind corresponding to the commitment she puts into her marriage. To know that her husband values and needs her is the true measure of her success.

A Muslim is urged to be merciful and forgiving towards others, even as he or she hopes for Allah's mercy and forgiveness on the Last Day. A wife should therefore forgive wrongs done in the past, and not continue to rake up old grievances.

A husband and wife should find a regular time to read the Qur'an and Hadith together, (with translation if they do not understand Arabic). This will help them in knowing the teachings of Islam and agreeing to practice them in their daily life, thereby increasing their mutual understanding and harmony.

When children come, the mother is the first school. She should be loving and affectionate to small children, directing them towards what is good and away from what is bad.

The Prophet is reported to have said:

"Be generous to your children, and excel in teaching them the best of conduct." (Hadith from Ibn Majah.)

Ibn Umar reported the Prophet saying:
"What does a parent leave as an inheritance for his child (that is) better than good morals?"
(Narrated by Tirmidhi & AI-Hakim)

As the children grow a little older, both father and mother should take care of their religious and moral education. They should demonstrate Islam by example and also explain on an informal basis the Islamic way of life. Children also love stories and can benefit from those which have a moral message. If it is prayer time the parents should call the children and pray together. After at least one prayer of the day they can spend a few minutes explaining or commenting on a verse of the Qur'an or a Hadith so that the children over the years grow up with a broad knowledge of the teachings of Islam. As the children grow bigger these discussions can be extended by reading from the Qur'an, the Hadith, the Sirah (biography of the Prophet) and other reliable books which deepen the understanding and encourage the young to realise Islam as the guiding force in their lives.

In this way the children themselves insha' Allah will grow up to become a source of deep joy and comfort to their parents. It is also mentioned in the Hadith that leaving behind righteous children who pray for their parents is a Sadaqatun Jariatun (continuous charity) which bring blessings to the parents even after their death.

Thus is the religion of Islam and its teachings of good will and kindness to all creatures passed on from generation to generation, first and foremost through the family. And in this light also one can appreciate the benefits of a successful marriage, and the importance given to marriage within the Islamic way of life.

Alike, but different - the male and the female. These differences are to be recognized as part of Allah's wisdom. They should neither be blurred by the "unisex" idea - the pretence that men and women are the same - nor exaggerated as if male and female were different species with no common feelings or abilities.

The ideal Muslim wife is not in competition with her husband. As a human soul created by Allah she knows she is her husband's equal. But in marriage she has a role which is complementary to that of her husband and her duties and responsibilities are not exactly the same as his. She can best fulfil these duties by putting aside selfish desires and seeing the welfare of her husband and children as her first priority after her duty to Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

> *"If I had ordained that any person should prostrate before another I would have ordained that a wife should prostrate before her husband."* (Hadith from Tirmidhi)

Such total submission to another human being however would constitute shirk (associating something with Allah in worship) which is a major sin. Nevertheless, the analogy makes clear the strength of the

love and commitment of an ideal Muslim wife towards her husband. (This is much easier for her to feel if the husband is playing his own part as a loving husband in accordance with the saying of the Prophet that *"the best of you are those who are kindest to their wives')*

The spirit of this relationship has been well captured by an American Muslim woman Noura Durkee in her article *"Marriage for a Muslima*"* which she ends as follows:

> *"One prays behind him in Salat. After a time, and thousands of rak'ats, one becomes filled with supreme gratitude for this. " ... Allah has made for you mates of your own nature ..." (Qur'an* 16:72). *One is in* Sajda *(prostration) not to, but with, him. He is a breath ahead, as a sign, breaking the path. Yet she is there, and were he to turn around, they would see in one another's eyes the countless mirrored reflections of each other. "*

Lastly I ask Allah for forgiveness for any mistake I may have made in this book, and pray that it will be acceptable to Him.

Muslim Educational Quarterly, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1990. The Islamic Academic, 23 Metcalfe Road, Cambridge, CB4 2DB, U.K.

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